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**Springfield Township High School**

**Graduation Project—Thesis Driven Research Product Organizer**

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| **Hook/Grabber:** Do you ever encounter mean, inconsiderate who completely ruin your day? Do wish that you lived in a world full of more compassionate, caring individuals? Do you want to see the world become less violent and fearful? I know I do. One way we can accomplish these things are by acknowledging the rights of animals. If we give them the some kind treatment that most humans receive, we will better the entire world. | |
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| **Thesis:**  In order to achieve a less violent, more compassionate society, the human race needs to acknowledge the rights of animals as well as their own and realize that they do not hold any superiority over animals. | |
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| **Essential Background information:**  Since the beginning of the creation of the earth, animals have been used to benefit humans. Through early acts of hunting and fishing, and later things like factory farming; experimentation; and cruel treatment in zoos, circuses, and homes, one may see how animals are not considered as worthy of humans. However, everyone, humans and animals alike, should be granted the basic rights: life, liberty, and freedom. Because animals suffer in the same way that humans do, it is impossible to justify actions that inflict pain on animals. Animals, like humans, are entitled to the basic right to live free of suffering. The mistreatment of animals is currently justified on the grounds of speciesism—the idea that humans and animals belong to different species and are therefore entitled to different rights. Like other forms of discrimination, speciesism is unjust. It is wrong to inflict pain on any sentient being, regardless of that being’s species. Opponents of animal rights often insist that the inherent superiority of humankind entitles people to complete dominion over animals. However, although humans are superior to animals in some respects, animals are superior to humans in others. The myth of human superiority is used as an excuse for people to exploit animals in their own needs. | |
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| **Argument 1:** In order to live a life of compassion, striving towards a society of less violence, one needs to recognize the violence that animals are put through every day. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “Compassion, rather than a fanatical adherence to some radical philosophy, is ultimately the driving force behind the animal rights movement” (Wilson pg.18).  “Believing that it is morally wrong to harm or kill animals for any reason, animal-rights groups passionately defend animals in the same way that abortion opponents defend the lives of fetuses. Some have even borrowed the civil-disobedience tactics of extreme abortion opponents and AIDS activists” (*Animal Testing* par.12).  - In 1975, Australian philosopher Peter Singer wrote a book called Animal Liberation in which he argued that humans should not use animals. Singer’s ideas are based on utilitarianism, one of many philosophies developed in the 17th and 18th centuries to help people decide what is right and wrong without invoking the Bible or other moral authorities. Utilitarians say we should judge actions strictly upon their consequences. That is, an action is good if it will provide the greatest benefit to the largest number of individuals. Singer took this notion further and said that when we calculate consequences, we must take into account the interests not only of human beings but also of animals that can experience pain and pleasure. If we fail to consider these animals’ interests, or if we give human beings special consideration, we are guilty of "speciesism."  - When most Americans eat meat, they don't stop to think about its source, how the animal whose body parts they are consuming was raised, treated, and killed. They don't stop to think if animals have souls. Meat eaters who otherwise care about the consequences of their actions or who argue for the rights of minorities or oppressed groups tend to create a psychological distance between what they eat and the fact that it came from the body of an animal that was imprisoned most or all of its life, usually suffered tortuous treatment, and was then killed, all to satisfy human taste buds and an addiction to flesh consumption. Meat eaters are typically raised to ignore these facts and rarely ever discuss or think about them. Meat is just food.  “If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be vegetarian” –Paul McCartney |
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| **Argument 2:**  Because there is no fundamental different between animals and humans—both being able to feel pain and suffer—one should treat animals as they do other people, and moreover, how they wish to be treated themselves. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “The differences between humans and animals amount to differences of degree, not of kind” (Wilson pg.20).  “The rights we really need to consider are the rights to life, liberty, and freedom from torture” (Wilson pg.21).  “Many animal-rights activists say that animals should be treated with the same respect accorded to humans. They maintain that just as humans do not have the right to use other humans for food, clothing, recreation and medical experiments, they do not have the right to use animals for such purposes” (*Animal Testing* par.2).  - American philosopher Tom Regan in a 1983 book, The Case for Animal Rights. Regan holds that people as well as many animals are entitled to certain rights simply because they have a basic understanding of the world and some sense of what they want from life. Regan’s version of this rights-based philosophy says that most mammals older than one year qualify for basic rights, e.g., the right to live without human interference. Regan argues that it is wrong to deprive animals of their rights or for humans to use animals to serve their own needs and interests. |
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| **Argument 3:**  Using the argument that animals are not as smart as humans is illogical; we do not grant less smart people less rights, so why should we grant animals less rights? Pain is pain and suffering is suffering; no matter how dumb or smart one is, they are able to feel those same emotions. This is a case of discrimination, an issue that was and continues to be one of the biggest threats to humankind, and we do not want to repeat past mistakes. Now, it should not only be targeted to humans, but to animals as well. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “The use of high intelligence as a requirement for possessing rights…is both inadequate and irrelevant” (Wilson pg.21).  **-** Koko, a gorilla that has been taught sign language, scored 80 on IQ test (only 20 less than ave. human).  “One must be able to identify a relevant different in the characteristic of the individual which justices different treatment. Just as racism, sexism, and all the others, have been recognized as unjust prejudices, so we must now recognize speciesism” (Wilson pg.22). |
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| **Argument 4:**  Our society takes for granted that animals will be used for clothing, food, entertainment, and scientific research. This should not happen anymore, for these acts are unnecessary. Animal welfare versus animal rights becomes a question of what is necessary and what is not, and we must notice the difference. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  - Trapping is an example of unnecessary suffering (caught in leg-hold trap, broken, struggle to free himself, live in constant pain, chew off own leg, bleed to death, die from infection 🡪 if still alive, trapper will kill animal by stepping on neck/chest, crushing lungs)  - Not meant to wear and eat animal products.  - “Studies often needlessly duplicate one another, resulting in a tragic waste of animal lives” (*Animal Testing* par.9) 🡪 “bad testing”  - “Proponents of animal testing are quick to respond that many of the most important medical procedures that Americans take for granted today were developed using animal testing. The polio vaccine, chemotherapy for cancer, insulin treatment for diabetes, organ transplants and blood transfusions are just some of the important advances that have come from research on animals, they assert” (*Animal Testing* par.38). |
| **Argument 5:**  Certain animal rights/welfare laws are not enforced, and are therefore not doing anything to help the animals. They continue to be “abused, isolated, injured and kept in dirty cages” (*Animal Testing* par.28). | **Evidence/Quotes:**  - “A primary concern of opponents of animal testing is that the Animal Welfare Act, the federal law that regulates the treatment of lab animals, is ineffective. The USDA is responsible for carrying out the law, but many animal-welfare and animal-rights groups claim that the law is not enforced” (*Animal Testing* par.27).  - Doesn’t apply to rats and mice (majority of animals used in research)  - No power to punish animal dealers and breeders who violate the law  - Law must be amended to allow inspectors to revoke the licenses of violators on the spot  - Only $300 per person for violation (not large enough to deter illegal conduct) 🡪 becomes cost of doing business |
| **Opposing Viewpoint** | **Response** |
| Argument 1: Animals are not as intelligent as humans and should therefore not receive the same rights. They are unworthy of such treatment.  Argument 2: Because animals are unable to engage in most of the activities that make human life meaningful, animal life lacks the same value as human life. Therefore, it is morally acceptable to sacrifice animals to improve the lives of humans.  Argument 3: The principle of rights is predicted on the capacity to make choices based on reason and morality—a characteristic that is limited to humans. Because animals lack the ability to act intellectually or morally, they cannot possess rights.  Argument 4: Animals are property of humans and exist to fulfill human needs.  Argument 5: Federal regulations governing the treatment of laboratory animals are weak and laxly enforced, resulting in the frequent abuse of animals. | 1. It is unjust to say rights are “privileges;” therefore, intelligence does not decide who does and does not have rights. It is a matter of who can feel pain.  2. A life is a life, no matter how long or how meaningful. Depriving someone of their basic right to live is a felony, and it should not be any different whether it is directed at a human or animal. It may be morally acceptable, but it is not morally just.  3. Again, intelligence should not be a deciding or qualifying factor of who should or shouldn’t gain rights. Animals are smart; they use logic and reasoning and have the ability to function, live, and provide for themselves, all of which take intelligence.  4. No one has a constitutional right to own an animal. Animals in most states are considered property.  5. Experimenting on and killing animals for research is unethical, cruel and unnecessary. It is wrong to subject animals to suffering and death for any reason, including that of furthering scientific knowledge. |
| **Conclusion:** *How will you clinch your argument? What are your final words to your audience?*  In conclusion, one must learn that is unethical to strip animals of the same basic rights that are granted to humans. Like humans, animals are living, breathing, feeling creatures that deserve as much respect as humans have. We do not want to repeat similar problems of discrimination, and we want to spread feelings of compassion. This problem needs to be addressed for many reasons. Some include: animal abuse is a serious antisocial behavior by children and adolescents, It is a relatively common childhood occurrence, It has potential negative developmental consequences, violence towards animals is related to interpersonal violence, it is connected to and may be a marker of family violence, the well-being of companion animals is being rejected, and it will help achieve a less violent society. | |